Southern African Humanities **30**: 305–21 December 2017 KwaZulu-Natal Museum

The Modernist trading store in KwaZulu-Natal as evocative material culture

Debbie Whelan
School of Architecture and the Built Environment, University of Lincoln; dwhelan@lincoln.ac.uk

ABSTRACT

From the 1950s onwards, a Modernist architectural paradigm characterized many trading store buildings in KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa. In contrast with the vernacular buildings that formed the majority of the early trading stores, these latter-day examples have formed the basis of the architectural toolkits that comprise contemporary African-owned community shops or *spazas* offering a much reduced level of trade in rural areas. These post-1994 structures are constructed in the image of the old and successful trading stores, suggesting a transfer of architectural idiom that transcends commonly constructed ideas of power and domination and offers a very different view of a past social landscape and the relations between traders and their customers. This paper discusses the architectural frameworks, examines the encoding of the trading store and recoding into the *spaza* shop, as well as its lodgment in memory. The Modernist trading store and its offspring, the *spaza*, have an embedded visceral recognition, connoting different ideas and memories and culminating in the suggestion that these structures comprise anamnestic repositories in the South African landscape.

KEY WORDS: Trading store, Modernism, anamnestic repository, vernacular architecture, memory.

'Turn left at the trading store': a simple direction points to the manner in which trading stores occupied physical positions that acted as landmarks in the landscape. They were political places too: an 1879 Anglo-Zulu War military map shows stores and police posts, as does the 1906 Bhambata Uprising military map, which shows stores and magistracies and mountains (Finney 1906). The 1930 Survey Compilation maps clearly delineate the boundaries of store sites, whereas the current topo-cadastral maps denote a store by using a capital 'S' (store) or 'W' (winkel). Their presence has always been of value in different political and social contexts, as identifiable landmarks in an evolving physical, social and cultural environment. Socially, they were vital and unpartisan spaces that spanned cultural, tribal and racial boundaries and facilitated all manner of transactions for over a century, firmly entrenching themselves in the minds and memories of residents in KwaZulu-Natal.

Early traders in what was then the separate territories of Natal and Zululand, established stores in the late 19th and early 20th century. Their stores were often constructed in a mixed vernacular[1] style using indigenous building methods, sometimes fused with prevailing technologies in settler vernacular architecture (Fig. 1). This hybrid approach prevailed for the first few decades of the 20th century, until more affluent and settled traders a generation or two later built new stores in the internationally vaunted architectural fashion of the time, Modernism.[2] This application of the vogue was not an intentional adoption of the style *per se*, but rather the deployment of a number of newly available materials such as Portland cement, structural steel and float glass, which broadened opportunities for the creation of structures that allowed more space and flexibility.

At the same time, individual approaches based on the new toolkit of materials and a rural pragmatism created a prevailing 'vernacular Modernism' that responded to the

ISSN 2305-2791 (online); 1681-5564 (print)

Fig. 1. Old store at Masotsheni (2008). Photo: D. Whelan.

same direct needs as the stores that went before. These new stores, built of cement and corrugated sheeting, with standard steel windows, were thus materials-driven Modernist in response, but still carried out all the functions and duties of the store in a community (Fig. 2). For many traders, this shift was not a statement of fashion and affluence, but prompted by changing legislation in the 1940s that dictated materials, signage and ventilation, and enforced by a more closely monitored compliance with health laws that had come into force since the mid-1920s.

In Zululand, traders and their stores flourished until the 99-year store leases were cancelled and the businesses handed over to the Bantu Investment Corporation at the time of the Consolidation of KwaZulu in 1977 (Fig. 3). Most of these stores closed soon afterwards. Natal had a different historical trajectory, but a variety of factors contributed to the closing of most established trading stores in the region, many now being long demolished or incorporated into new buildings. However, they live on in the Modernist material and visual toolkit that is replicated in the small community shops or *spazas* that litter the contemporary rural landscape, selling

Fig. 2. Silutshana Store (2008). Photo: D. Whelan.

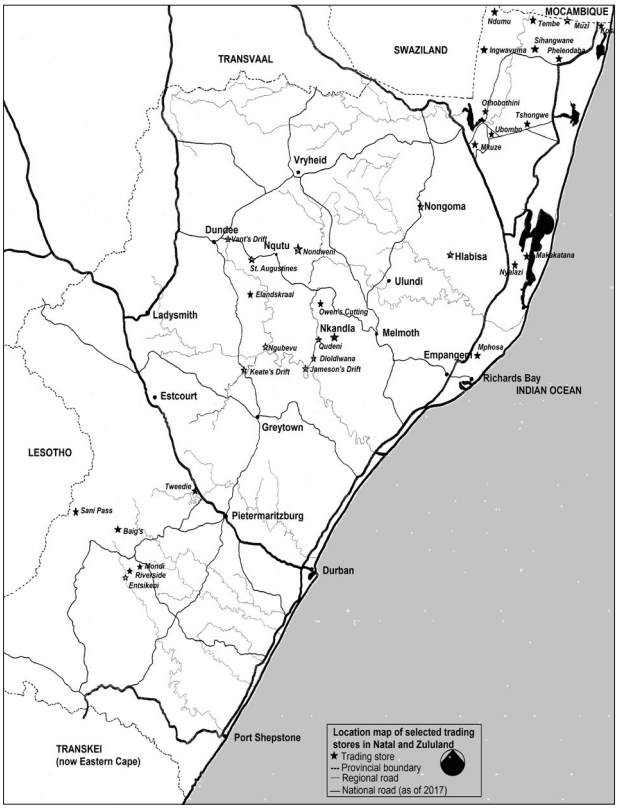

Fig. 3. Map of some stores in the Zululand area (2015).

fewer items, unable to support community extension, but embodying the idea of trade and prosperity.[3]

This paper explores the acceptance and continuance of these architectural forms and their continued proliferation against a background of Modernism and its subsequent connotations with politics and control. Also, by identifying the tangible and mercurial qualities of the trading store, many of which are embedded in recollection and nostalgia, one can comprehend why these institutions are instinctively recognized, and perpetuated in memory.

In order to contextualize the buildings primarily as pieces of architecture, I discuss Modernism and Post-Modernism from an architectural perspective, before investigating more closely those components that interpret the cultural values and act as vectors for the transference of the architectural idiom and its reinterpretation.

UNDERSTANDING THE ARCHITECTURAL FORM

Modernism

The architectural movement known as Modernism emerged in Europe and America in the early 20th century and was firmly entrenched internationally by 1950. Partly enabled by new technologies in the mass production of structural steel, Portland cement and glass (all developed in the previous century), the style is characterized by a pared-down,

box-like aesthetic. Its diagnostic features are roofs that are perceived as 'flat', high-level standard section steel 'ribbon' windows and a strongly horizontal, as opposed to vertical, format. These features differ dramatically from the Victorian-derived settler styles and indigenous vernacular architectures expressed in available natural materials.

Practically speaking, the proportions and scales of trading stores built after 1920 already had the potential for change, given the greater availability and affordability of Portland cement after the First World War. New materials, such as reinforced concrete and steel, also meant that new buildings could be constructed with larger roof spans. Besides altering the visual massing of the building, creating more monumental structures, reinforced concrete and steel altered the proportions of openings. Fenestration, particularly, moved from a vertical format common to sash and casement windows, to a horizontal format informed by standard steel sections. This meant that larger openings could be attained, as well as the high-level 'ribbon' windows characteristic of Modernism. For traders, this elevational shift was also practical: it allowed more room on the walls inside for shelves.

However, the paradigm shift from the traditional vertical format for openings common in the preceding Victorian and Edwardian periods and indeed all of architectural history, to the Modernist horizontal format took some time. The practicality of incorporating new materials was also limited by distance and expense. A critical point was reached with the promulgation of Natal Ordinance No. 30 of 1947, which stipulated necessary 'modernization', including increased light and ventilation, and the use of more permanent materials. For many traders this meant constructing new buildings. One trader in Maputaland had to rebuild 23 out of his 24 'sub-standard' stores, most of which had been of wood-and-iron or local materials (Rutherfoord 2000: 54). Ordinance No. 30 also made the submission of building plans to authorities and resultant building inspections mandatory. Importantly, Clause 35 of the Ordinance states:

> At or over the principal entrance to any premises in respect of which a licence to carry on any trade … has been issued, there shall be conspicuously displayed the style or firm-name under which such trade is being carried on, and if such style or firm-name consists of or contains any name in addition other than the usual name or names of the person or the partner in any partnership to whom such licence was issued, then also the name of that person, or in the case of any partnership the names of the three senior principal partners named in the licence, or if all the partners hold equal shares, the names of three of them.

Accommodating this clause was often resolved by the construction of a parapet wall in new buildings,[4] a feature that subscribed to the pared-down, box-like Modernist aesthetic. This became one of the most enduring signs of the trading store.

Architecturally, these new trading stores, perhaps unconsciously, filled many of the tenets of Modernism as practised in Europe and America by its founders. For example, the rational planning of the Masotsheni and Silutshana stores (Figs 2 and 4) illustrates Chicago School architect Louis Sullivan's dictum 'Form follows function'—with basic and necessary components arranged to maximum effect, allowing for wall space, counter space and waiting space, both internally and externally (Frampton 2007: 56). The design of the buildings was driven by the needs of the traders and their customers, rather than subscribing to an alien or irrelevant predetermined layout. The minimal decoration, linear forms and planar surfaces creating an architecture dominated by walls rather than roof, together with the

Fig. 4. Vumanhlamvu Store, Nkandla: archetypal example using modernist toolkit (2006). Photo: D. Whelan.

simplified roof-scape of a mono-pitch roof at a shallow fall presenting a clean-cut box, comply with the aesthetic principles of the Swiss Modernist Le Corbusier (Gympel 2005: 91). In the Nyalazi Store (Fig. 5), high-level horizontally positioned 'ribbon' windows allowed for maximum internal shelf space.

There is no evidence of locally produced materials (except brick), no thatch, no stone and no earth, thus removing the buildings from the realms of the direct vernacular. There is no decoration and no richness in texture, partly because traders did not spend time and money gentrifying their buildings. These are honest buildings, in that they reflect what they do, a quality that would have satisfied Bauhaus architect Ludwig Mies van der Rohe (Frampton 2007: 161).

It should be noted that Modernist architecture was also associated with the apartheid era; it was the prevailing style of police stations, administration blocks and other official accommodations of the National Party government.[5] Yet despite this association, Modernist stores set the architectural template for today's community *spaza* shops.

Fig. 5. Nyalazi Store (2008). Photo: D. Whelan.

The application of the term 'Modernism' can be taken one step further. Considering the stores constructed particularly as a result of the 1947 legislation, 'vernacular Modernism' as a descriptor for these recent structures is suggested in the light of the comments of Nazar Al Sayyad (2006: xvii), who notes that "Epistemologically … the *meaning* of the vernacular also has to change … that the vernacular in some may in fact be the most modern of the modern". In the light of Oliver's (1997: xxiii) definition of vernacular architecture (see note 3), it would seem appropriate that laws stipulating materials to be used are also constraints in the production of the vernacular, in the same way in which culture and landscape offer their levels of control with respect to material, form and arrangement.

Fig. 6. *Spaza* shop: archetypal example of the appropriation of the Modernist form (2006). Photo: D. Whelan.

Given this strong vernacular aspect, Modernism is not manifested in the grand 'International Style' in Zululand. Its implementation was neither designed nor speculative. The style was appropriate for a specific function, suggesting that Modernism has been appropriated in the creation of a 'cultural niche', or as Marcel Vellinga (2006: 87) puts it, "vernacularized". The Modernist trading stores and their *spaza* shop progeny, both as metaphor and structure, were and are architectural vernaculars situated in the temporal present (Fig. 6).

Post-Modernism

Post-Modernism as an open-ended philosophical approach imbued much thinking in the later 20th century, and approaches to architecture followed suit, instigated in part by the American architect Robert Venturi. Post-Modernism sought to address some of the by then proven wrongs of Modernism in architecture; it is ironic that Robert Venturi's analysis of Post-Modern architecture is of use in further understanding the Zululand trading stores and their relationship with the *spaza* shop.

Venturi flaunted the whimsical, multi-faceted and decorated aspects of Post-Modernism, starkly opposed to the pared-down, humourless boxes of the Modernist movement, using the celebrated 'duck' and 'decorated shed' as tropes. His first example was a structure built in the form of a giant duck, situated on Long Island, New York, which housed a shop selling duck products. Decoding this, he suggested

Fig. 7. The 'decorated shed': Post-Modern variant of store near Amatikulu (2006). Photo: D. Whelan.

that the symbolic form of the building dominates, rather than its actual function being articulated, whereas in true Modernism the function of the building would be directly readable from the form (Evers 2003: 792). Interpreting a structure with respect to the symbolism it embodies situates the *spaza* shop as a *pastiche* of the trading store in a Post-Modern framework, in which the 'symbol' of the store is more important than the diminished level of trade that it actually carries out. However, as has been suggested, this is in addition to the *idea* of the function that is being replicated.

Venturi's second example, the 'decorated shed', is described as a simple functional box appended with decorations and signage, which may indicate its function but actually have little to do with what is going on inside (Evers 2003: 792). Thus the outside skin of the building has little relevance to its inside spaces and use and intention. 'Decorated shed' can therefore be used to interpret both the general declarations on the parapet wall and the colour and logos advertising maize meal, tea, sorghum beer and even batteries that litter the walls of contemporary *spaza* shops. The *spaza* shops are not what they display, merely a vehicle for advertising expression. Post-Modernism is an ideal architectural style with which to present the architectures of inverted spaces such as shopping malls, theatres and casinos. Trading stores were the inverted spaces of the past owned by all, and this memory is perhaps something that has been perpetuated in the highly decorated stores of today (Fig. 7).

Whilst Modernism may have been deployed during the apartheid era as an architectural style for buildings related to bureaucratic processes and thus carry associative memory, trading stores demonstrate no visible baggage in their continued replication. A primary clue to the lack of association with Modernism and hegemony, and the appropriation and replication of the form as smaller-scaled community shops, comes from an African trader at Amatikulu who said that "We were the Sol Kerzners of the area."[6] The relatively small store that had put him and his family through school and university had been established by his father in the 1960s. As an African applicant for a trading licence, he had had to undergo the usual onerous procedure of application

for a store site, application for a mortgage bond, submission of plans and regular authoritative checks. Their store was constructed through the proper channels. They traded and made money. Their store *meant* money. Thus, it is suggested that Modernism at this detached level had connotations of anything but power and authority, but rather embodied ideas of wealth and entrepreneurial spirit. In the last six decades, the form of the vernacular Modernist trading store has become an archetype, an intrinsically recognizable form in the KwaZulu-Natal landscape.

This statement leads into a more focused study in order to understand how it was that these buildings came to be accorded value in the social realm.

INCORPORATION AND GENERIFICATION

Figure 8 is a diagram of the process of the incorporation and generification of the trading store form into the architecturally similar *spaza* shop. Its conceptual construction was informed to some degree by Amos Rapoport (2006: 188), who diagrammatically separates the 'ideal' set of differences *within* traditional[7] groups from a grey area *between* two traditional groups—Figure 8 describes an interface of vernacular approaches in the creation of an orthogonal structure which would have been new to the African customer in the late 19th century.

The store and its trading floor is represented as a central grey area, which can be construed socially as a liminal space, architecturally as a fusion of western aesthetic and construction practice with indigenous materials, and commercially as a space in which people exchanged both goods and cash. This grey area of common ground was symbiotic, providing mutually beneficial space and functions to both trader and customer, and belonged to both trader and customer.

At the outset, both immigrant traders and their resident customers had access to the same materials found in the environment, although culturally they had different expectations as to what buildings should look like. For traders, this initial phase is in synergy with what Margot Winer (2001: 261) terms "architecture of coping".[8] From the turn of the 20th century and as traders became more affluent, they were gradually able to access new materials such as corrugated iron, which they adapted to fit their architectural expectations and ultimately express their position, thus creating an "architecture of identity" (Winer 2001: 262). African customers frequented the store, were familiar with the form of the building and the materials and, at the same time, subject to the pressures of the requirements of the Hut Tax,[9] yet remained steadfast in constructing homesteads within the traditional frameworks.

For many traders, the 1947 legislation enforced a change to 'modernity'. The new Modernist store, using new materials and structural systems became the new grey area, whilst the social and economic functions of these stores did not change. This period of architectural resolution is reminiscent of Winer's (2001: 263) "architecture of affluence", and certainly at this point, many of the older traders had reached a degree of prosperity. As before, African indigenous vernacular architecture largely prevailed, despite the greater availability of accessible new materials and technology. Whilst in other parts of the country orthogonal buildings were more actively constructed,[10] it was only towards the end of the 20th century that a major movement towards the construction of orthogonal buildings could be seen in the rural parts of KwaZulu-Natal.[11] Thus, for nearly a century, there existed the grey space of the store in which active trade and

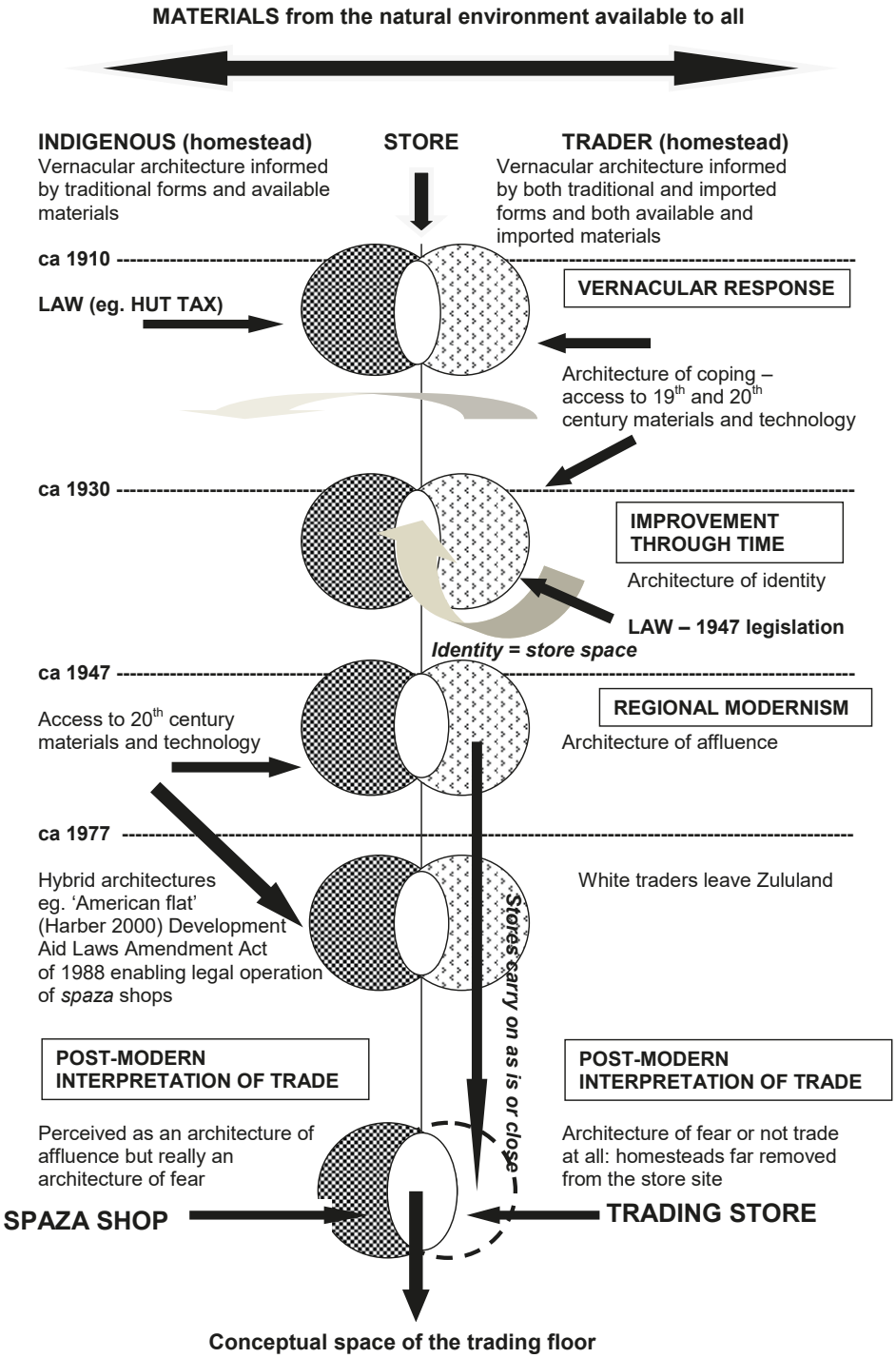

Fig. 8. The 'middle ground' as extrapolated from the architecture.

social interaction occurred, although both traders and their African customers kept their home spaces distinct and individual with little acculturative blending. It is this architectural grey space, described in the hatched sub-set in Figure 8, that further evokes the social and economic functions of 'trade', which have been visually perpetuated in the construction of the *spaza* shops and which are manifested in their 'copy-cat' architecture. Following Jencks (1992: 23), they demonstrate a direct plundering of the past, which—unlike the appropriated whimsy of Venturi—is not employed in an ironic manner, but rather one that is directly referenced. The *spaza* shop is an appropriation of the architectural format of the trading store by the user and not the owner, by the previously dispossessed and the recently possessed. This renders it a re-interpretation of an institution deemed to be of value. With respect to the cultural process of the transmission of the vernacular, what is suggested then is that the vernacular Modernist tradition of the trading store mutating into the *spaza* shop is enduring and will continue for some time by dint of the message of trade that it carries.

The temporal and geographical transmission of this idea and its ultimate generification is explained in part by Simon Bronner (2006), who itemizes the manner in which communal promotion of the idea is perpetuated. He suggests that since similarities exist, a series of precedents that are culturally and socially determined ensures the generation of the forms. "In the interrogation of tradition is revealed the process of learning of direction from 'tradition bearers' to others or the socially shared events in which tradition is invoked" (Bronner 2006: 27). Thus, the grey area in Figure 8 bears the notion of the tradition of trade and the social rituals that accompany it.

Bronner's open-ended assertion rings truer than the 'constraints' of tradition as submitted by Tuan (cited in Bronner 2006: 26), in that the trading store-*spaza* hybrid can be interpreted as a vernacular 'middle ground', which was instituted by the social and economic functional success of the trading store in Zululand—mutually negotiated from a cultural and aesthetic point of view, enabled by the provisions of new materials and enforced by the law. Similarly the trading store building is appropriated by the customer base, which simultaneously has not altered its 'tradition' or vernacular to suit. The incorporated structure is representative of the specific function of 'trade'—a metaphor—and means little else (Evers 2003: 792).[12] It is the 'duck' that is appropriated, not the structure.

ENCODING

Encoding the trading store and valourizing it is deeply interconnected with perception and memory. As an 'artefact', a building has embodied value and at the same time embodies value. Bronner (2006: 23) elaborates on this quality, noting that the interpretation and validation is controlled by human thought and emotion, and is thus subject to flux and alteration. Roger Fisher (1992: 22) asserts that the artefact or building has an ecosystemic agency and, as a result, "the artefact within the socio-cultural realm is actively encountered by mindful individuals with the associated techniques of memory and recall". This embodied meaning of the structure is thus connected to both time and place, which creates a structure with a specific meaning that has value for those people or peoples in whose cultural and social system it operates. That a specific store is one of many similar institutions providing myriad ancillary functions besides

trade (across time and distance), means that the validation becomes entrenched in a collective memory recalling relationship, sensual recollection and event. The building itself then becomes a metaphor for these recollections and embodies for some the primary perception—that of wealth.

The impact of this metaphor of the trading store in the diverse cultural landscapes is one that transcends culture, politics and economy, and which both codifies and re-codifies the structure within its social, commercial and political environment. Parallel research in the material-cultural field by Chris Tilley (cited in Bender 1998: 32) reacts to the landscape around Stonehenge from a phenomenological perspective. Tilley advocates the use of the metaphor as a means of revealing new perceptions and encouraging new linkages. In this way he suggests that Stonehenge, understood and compared against other contemporaneous stone circles, has become the trope for understanding the past, and at the same time creates cognition of the relationships in the present, which can result in the formation of a new archetype (Tilley in Bender 1998: 32). In the same way, the generic trading store is the social, physical and commercial template for the *spaza* shop. However, this relationship is more deeply entrenched, in that the mental models imposed by memory and association extend to planning and aesthetics, and add another layer. Ronald Lewcock (2006: 200) says: "The concepts [of architectural designs] must exist in the mind before they are built in reality. And in this way works of architecture naturally reflect the structure of the mental models that formed them." The mental models that generate the *spaza* shop are based on both physical and metaphysical parameters and are deeply entrenched in memory. The important point is that this process, or one very like it, is likely to give rise to 'shared' ideas that have the strength of 'archetypes'. Such ideals or concepts would take two forms: (1) those common to all humans; and (2) those belonging specifically to one society (Lewcock 2006: 201).

The 'message' of trade is, therefore, that which was carried over from the early stores demolished in 1947, and re-embedded in their Modernist reconstructions, which acted as archetypes and templates for contemporary *spaza* shops. This socially and economically important idea was symbiotic and mutually negotiated; indeed, the life of the building was extended beyond its physical being. Melanie van der Hoorn (2003), speaking of relics of the Berlin Wall, suggests that the 'social life' of an object can be extended. The survival of the Modernist trading store in its fragmented form as the *spaza* shop is explained in part by Van der Hoorn (2003: 193), who says: "a fragment gets the character of a [secular] relic, the object in itself—owning it, touching it—has a major relevance and the belief in the relic's inherent qualities determines its further social life."

RECODING

With the trading store (and particularly the Modernist store) structure explained in terms of an encoding that developed over many decades, it is important to extrapolate the means by which it has proliferated in the form of *spaza* shops.

Replication serves to continue the encoding: as Fisher (1992: 18) says, "the persistence of the artefact preserves its agency as message bearer. Past values and meanings can be continually transmitted into the present." This factor continues to keep the artefact meaningful and alive in a cultural system that may be mutating rapidly. Certainly, change has been a feature of the last two decades in South Africa, and this explains

the manner in which the format of the reconstructed buildings of the 1950s survive in their thousands today in drastically reduced and also miniature form as *spaza* shops.

These embodied ideas are then distilled, reworked and recoded to produce new formats, while simultaneously "the artefact retains potency within the cultural realm as agent for cultural retrieval or change" (Fisher 1992: 18). This means that the situation of the trading store as a functioning locus within and between communities and cultural groups has imbued it with an enduring meaning as a neutral and socially symbiotic space; at the same time, it is a physical reference point representing the values that it embodies.

It is therefore the *spaza* shop that has brought the store into the present, recoding and re-explaining the tacit function of the building, which itself embodies a host of points of memory that differ and have altered meanings for different people. Old people may look at a trading store and immediately remember smells, events and relationships, whereas young people see a *spaza* shop and recognize it as a simple store that sells limited goods. For young people looking at a *spaza* shop, although the original physical meaning of the architectural format has not changed, the metaphysical environment has, and the replication of the building as artefact has preserved its message of 'trade' and, ironically, 'wealth'. Recoding has resulted in reinterpretation by a different generation of users, and will most probably be recoded again, with different interpretations, by the next generation. This shift is reinforced by Van der Hoorn's (2003: 189) suggestion that architecture's 'social' life can be one that is successfully re-appropriated and reinterpreted, to the extent that it can "act as an intermediary onto which people can project their memories, frustrations or experiences with regard to the object that used to occupy an important place".

THE 'ANAMNESTIC REPOSITORY' OF THE TRADING STORE

The trading store structure in its myriad architectural resolutions, whether vernacular or Modernist, is immediately recognizable as a trading store by older residents in KwaZulu-Natal, regardless of their race or location. Younger residents will identify more readily its progeny, the *spaza* shop, as a community store. Examining the aesthetic values that gives the store credence was an important starting point in the discussion of this structure from a material culture point of view, as it laid the ground-work for understanding the components of the building. However, a more phenomenological discussion is needed to underpin this and establish why these structures are replicated and why so many had been sacked or demolished or closed and not been re-appropriated. The answer may lie in the words of Barbara Bender (1998: 67), who, speaking of the sarsens at Stonehenge, says that

> the empowering of the stones, or other elements in nature, is dependent upon the particularities of the social, economic and political relations, and is part of the process through which people are both created by, and creators of, the world in which they live.

Mark Edmonds (in Bender 1998) notes the evidence that people in the later Bronze Age created what he refers to as 'lattice-pattern field systems' *around* Stonehenge. He says (in Bender 1998: 75):

> they're *still* respecting the monument. They don't encroach. The monument may not be actively used in rituals, but it still occupies a place in myth and oral tradition. A place where ghosts live – they're no longer your ancestors, but they're still very powerful.

Extrapolating this information, it is possible that 'ghosts' inhabit many of the trading stores and that the 'presencing' of the building itself, to a large extent, is part of the 'ghost'.[13] This 'ghost' is not the spook of legend, but rather a series of memories, good and bad, sensory stimuli such as smell, taste, texture and sound, combined with ritual and other experiences that are triggered with the recognition of the structural archetype.

The multiple and complex values accorded the trading store in the minds of people in KwaZulu-Natal serve, perhaps, as an 'anamnestic[14] repository'—an object that stores and brings to mind specific memories which are triggered through sensory means. Anamnesia describes memory and recall; thus people remembering the old stores call to mind the encoding of the social space (which also implies the depth of the relationship with the trader)[15] in the maintenance of emotive value in the store. The idea of the trading store as a social and spatial construct endures in the collective and generational memory, physically replicated in the form of the community *spaza* shops.

The term 'anamnestic repository' as a descriptor for the variety of embedded and individually recognized characteristics of the trading store as an institution, physical structure and social interface, draws on a variety of discourses. James Young (1993: xi) refers to "memorial sites" that act as points of reference for what he calls "collect*ed* memory".[16] He studies holocaust sites and suggests that monuments associated with holocausts are repositories for collect*ed* memory, which he defines as "the many discrete memories that are gathered into common 'memorial spaces' and assigned common meaning" (Young 1993: xi). The value of the collected memory is that the individualities are recognized as forming part of a whole. With the discussion on recoding in the previous section in mind, the entrenchment and recognition of this building form in the minds of the residents of the province, and its replication, is no accident. Understanding this unspoken social value is vital.

According to Young (1993), monuments such as Dachau and Auschwitz embody the disparate collected memories of the visitor—they remember conflict, hegemony and death. Such sites may also have deeper meanings for some groups of people than for others. In contrast, trading stores themselves are not intrinsically 'monuments' or 'memorials', although they do have monumental value in the landscape. However, from the replication of the architectural theme, and the permanence of many of the old structures, their codification in people's minds is monumental in evoking memories.

Following Young's (1993) construct of memorial sites stimulating 'collected memories', Peter Carrier (2000: 48) describes the French historian Pierre Nora's seminal approach, in which he considers places of memory as not being physical sites onto which people pin their identities, but rather points of interrogation as to how their memories are constructed. Carrier (2000) discusses Nora's assemblage of pluralist approaches to memory located in practices, symbols, items and places and identifies (Carrier 2000: 38) Nora's direction of the published volumes on the subject as

> itself a monument, a symbol and a *symptom* of the political role of social memory in France today, which both reveals and projects nationhood as cultural identity rather than as a politically determined group of citizens.

This promotes the idea of the 'monument' being a simultaneously tangible and intangible 'thing', in which a coherence of ideas, concepts and material items—'sites of memory' or *lieux de mémoire*—can collectively form a 'monument' in the absence of

continuity through rupture of 'environments of memory' or *milieux de mémoire*. Nora (1989) suggests the idea of *lieux de mémoire* as a baseline for contextualizing palimpsests and concepts. In the event of major ruptures in society and history, he suggests that compilations of ideas and concepts become places on which to pin memories. Thus, the concept of *lieux de mémoire*, in the absence of the now defunct *milieux de mémoire,* interrogates the placing of store buildings in collect*ed* memories, as suggested by Young (1993: xi), and facilitates their presentation through different lenses, creating anamnestic repositories. Carrier (2000: 40) concludes that "places of memory act as instrumental vehicles for collective memories underpinning social cohesion." This suggests composite memories that co-exist rather than embedding or supporting minority nationalisms. Unlike Young's (1993) 'memorial sites', which evoke memories and emotions through shared experience of a specific event, Nora's idea of *lieux de mémoire* is broader and more egalitarian. Trading stores were nationally experienced institutions and did not necessarily rely on any form of direct constant participation to evoke memory.

Gaston Bachelard (1997: 86) suggests that "the house furnishes us with dispersed images and a body of images at the same time." This is so in the interpretation of the trading store as a generic structure, in which the intensity of memory of one particular store can be replaced by the notion of it in all of its components in the landscape. In my research, I found that even the most intimate participants, the traders, remember the space rather than the layout or the specific fabric of the building, finding it difficult to draw plans of their own stores. Consultation with other traders' memories was necessary in order to re-conceive their own spaces, suggesting that the space itself was less important than the occurrences within and around its confines, supporting the manner in which the abstract form of the building store reconstitutes the past and recalls identity. Joëlle Bahloul (1996: 128) says of Dar-Refayil in colonial Algeria, that it is the word that forms the image in memory, and not the image that stimulates the verbal constructions, although both are vital in the full construction of the memory.

An anamnestic repository is therefore a generic evocative space formed of a physical construct that is enriched by metaphysical elements both sensory and recollective. It provides a series of variant hooks, each holding separate memories and evocations, which together describe the collected memory of the trading store. It is a memorial of the mind and memory, recall of an institution in its entirety for its whole value, without wrapping it in acid-free paper and archiving it in an isolated social and cultural context.

CONCLUSION

The 'iconic' trading store building has embedded itself solidly in the minds of KwaZulu-Natal residents, and there is little in the architectural vernacular of European derivation that has a similar level of visceral meaning. Modest as they were architecturally, they were also of fundamental importance in the creation of social, political and economic relationships in KwaZulu-Natal and also in the old Zululand. The memories of the Zululand trading store are constructed from a variety of different components: the ritual of trade, the store, the smell, the trader, the customers, the ancillary functions that they served, the remoteness, the sense of being a 'pioneer' on the 'frontier'. These components form the *lieux de mémoire* specific to the trading store, all of which act independently in the construction of separate memories, yet are inextricably connected.

The trading store in its entirety is both tangible and intangible—it is a collection of *lieux de mémoire*—and operates as a physical encapsulation of Nora's ideas into a single repository of collected memory, an anamnestic repository. Importantly, the idea of the anamnestic repository is one that is subject to constant change and interpretations with shifting reference points as generations pass and different manifestations of the same emerge. Certainly in today's contested society it has great relevance: as Lawrence Taylor (1999: 235) wrote, "It is precisely those whom history … has made aware of change and conflict that most feel the power of rooms and their objects as anchors of memory and identity".

NOTES

[1] The most relevant, though limited, definition is given by Paul Oliver (1997: xxiii): "Vernacular architecture comprises the dwellings and all other buildings of the people. Related to their environmental contexts and available resources, they are customarily owner or community built utilising traditional technologies. All forms of vernacular architecture are built to meet specific needs, accommodating the values, economies and ways of living of the cultures that produce them."

[2] It is important to differentiate between modernity, as being located in the modern, and Modernism as an architectural movement characterized by simplicity of form and largely generated by technology and new materials.

[3] Adrian Koopman (2000) describes them thus: "A spaza is a mini shop, often housed in a shipping container. It is frequently placed on a road verge and sells basics such as cooldrinks, snacks, cigarettes, sweets, etc." Whilst Koopman concentrates on the urban form, the rural *spaza* is determined by scale and contents. Preston-Whyte & Rogerson (1991) describe the *spaza* as being part of an urban context and operating out of a home. Rural people refer to them as '*spaza* shops'.

[4] Old stores or stores that had hipped or ridge roofs and not mono-pitches like the Modernist stores, often erected a large sign above the main elevation, in effect creating a parapet. Some placed a freestanding sign next to the building.

[5] Hart and Winter (2001: 85) speak of the appropriation of buildings in the 'Cape Dutch' genre by the Afrikaner nationalists as being symbols of supremacy in the 1950s and 1960s. Also, Suzanne Preston Blier (2006: 237) notes Foucault's (1973: 207) comments regarding the connotations of structures with oppression and political systems.

[6] Sol Kerzner is a well-known South African hotel magnate.

[7] Rapoport's words referring to historically embedded as opposed to contemporary, in engagement with Environment-Behaviour Relations in which culture and environment are related (Rapoport 2006:183).

[8] Winer (2001) follows a thread of settler architecture on the Eastern Cape frontier, submitting four stages of architecture, namely those of coping, identity, affluence and fear.

[9] This tax favoured those who lived in orthogonal buildings, on the assumption that people living in such structures were Christian converts and as such contributed to the colonial fiscus. People who were taxed were people living in traditional fashion in round buildings, who were often polygamous (Ramdhani 1985).

[10] A comprehensive monograph by Frescura (1989) traces the development of the mono-pitch 'highveld' dwelling, fusing history and anthropology in describing the adoption and transmission of the structure across the country. This building is simple and orthogonal, consisting of one or two rooms with a simple roof-scape. Frescura (1989: 380) suggests that this building form, colloquially known as *'iFokona', 'iFlat'* or *'iPlata'* was appropriated as early as the late 18th century and was connected to missionaries in the same way as the *amaKholwa* (missionary converts) constructed houses in a western tradition. After the 1940s, this building tradition was more prevalent. Frescura (1989: 383) lists a number of factors as possible generators for the development of the 'flat'-roofed building, including legislation, availability of stoves and interaction with traders, farmers and missionaries. Rodney Harber (2000) discusses a similar building form, known as the 'American Flat' or 'Jo'burg Roof', describing it as an orthogonal, incrementally constructed building with architecturally unresolved roof-scapes. Typically, mono-pitch roofs dominate, but fall in conflicting directions, openings are simple and the door is flanked by two windows. Parapets are common, verandas less so.

[11] This is borne out in aerial photographs. This does not mean to say, however, that African people in Natal and Zululand did *not* construct buildings in orthogonal forms.

[12] Contemporary African vernacular architecture is moving in a distinctly different direction from Modernism.

[13] Buchli and Lucas (2001) negotiate the implications of the contemporary application of archaeology. They note, referring to Vidler's (1992) comments on the archaeological excavation of Pompeii that the 'uncanny' repetition—"a doubling through a simultaneous process of presencing and (temporal) distancing"—creates what they refer to as an "absent present"—a ghost which is 'unassimilable' and tenuous (Buchli & Lucas 2001: 12).

[14] The Merriam-Webster dictionary defines *anamnesis* as a 'recalling to mind': <http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/anamnesis>, site accessed April 2015.

[15] Stores that have been demolished or sacked are perhaps ones in which the last trader failed the community in some manner, or alternatively that the memories of the traders have passed.

[16] As opposed to collect*ive* memory, defined by Merriam-Webster as "shared or assumed by all members of the group", <http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/collective>, site accessed February 2017.

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